

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method using a communication network to compensate at least one user in exchange for work undertaken by the at least one user, the method comprising the steps of:

5 using the communication network to perform work, the work being defined by a content provider in a manner which does not target specific user profiles, the work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the content provider;

10 making an offer of compensation units to the at least one user in exchange for the performed work whereby the compensation is to be provided after a defined number of the interactions between the user and the content provider;

 accepting the offered compensation units; and

 storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and the content provider;

15 transferring the accepted compensation units from a content provider account to a user account after the defined number of interactions has been reached, the content provider account corresponding to the content provider offering the compensation units and the user account corresponding to the user who completed the work.

20 2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the work is defined as a trail, the trail including a plurality of portions, compensation units being offered by the content provider for each portion.

 3. The method according to Claim 2, wherein the compensation unit amounts offered by the content provider are not the same for each portion.

4. The method according to Claim 2, further comprising the step of publishing a trail, the publishing step including the steps of:

creating programmatic code needed by the content provider to support a web site on a content provider processor associated with the content provider; and
5 displaying the created programmatic code.

5. The method according to Claim 2, wherein each portion is created by the steps of specifying:

to whom the portion is to be made available;
a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;
5 the compensation unit amount for the portion;
a mode of interaction between the at least one user and the content provider processor associated with the content provider;
a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;
10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and
the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

6. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the transferring step is completed upon a successful evaluation of the accepted offer.

7. The method according to Claim 6, wherein the successful evaluation includes at least one of:

verifying that the at least one user's session is valid;
recognizing the at least one user as a valid user;
5 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user; and

verifying that the at least one user is approved to accept the offer.

8. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting a client to a user terminal corresponding to the at least one user, the client being used to accept the offer.

9. The method according to Claim 8, wherein the step of transmitting the client is executed upon at least one of:

verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;

5 determining that an ID corresponding to the at least one user is valid and is not on hold;

determining that the offer location is correct, a correct offer location being a web site URL from which the at least one user accepted the offer which matches a predetermined URL; and

10 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user.

10. The method according to Claim 8, wherein a cookie is checked to ensure that the user entered a web site associated with the offering content provider and within a predetermined period of time of accepting the offer prior to transmitting the client.

11. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the interactions comprise any of:

visits to the content provider's website;

actions taken by the user at the content provider's website; and

a predefined number of time period increments spent at the content provider's

website.

12. The method according to Claim 11, further comprising recording each interaction in a storage medium as the interaction takes place and transferring the accepted compensation units after the defined number of interactions have occurred.

13. The method according to Claim 12, further comprising assigning a code to each web page of the content provider's web site and recording the code in the storage medium when an interaction occurs.

14. The method according to Claim 1, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions; and (2) a defined maximum time between two interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted compensation units.

15. The method according to Claim 14, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

16. A transaction processor coupled to a communication network, the transaction processor compensating at least one user in exchange for work undertaken by the at least one user, the transaction processor comprising:

a database, the database comprising:

5 an account holder data structure having at least one account holder record; and

a content provider data structure having at least one content provider record; and

10 a central processing unit, the central processing being coupled to the database and executing the functions of:

evaluating a request from a user terminal to transmit a client to the user terminal;

transmitting the client to the user terminal in accordance with a positive evaluation, the client enabling the user terminal to request compensation in the form of compensation units for work performed by a user of the user terminal, the work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the content provider;

storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and the content provider;

processing a request received from the user terminal to credit an account holder record corresponding to the user of the user terminal with compensation units in accordance with work performed by the user; and

executing a first transaction process which accesses the database and transfers the compensation units from a content provider record corresponding to the offering content provider to the account holder record corresponding to the user if the defined number of interactions has been reached.

17. The transaction processor according to Claim 16, wherein the at least one account holder record includes fields comprising:

an account holder ID;
demographic information;
an account holder country;
an account holder language;
personal information corresponding to the account holder; and
a compensation unit balance.

18. The transaction processor according to Claim 16, wherein the at least one content provider record includes fields comprising:

- 5 a content provider ID;
details corresponding to the content provider's business;
a compensation unit balance; and
a URL corresponding to a home page associated with the content provider.

19. The transaction processor according to Claim 16, wherein the database further comprises at least one of:

- 5 a compensation data structure, the compensation data structure defining ways in which the at least one user may earn compensation units;
a redemptions data structure, the redemptions data structure defining the ways in which earned compensation units may be spent;
a transactions data structure, the transactions data structure including records relating to accepted offers and redemption of compensation units; and
10 a sessions data structure, the sessions data structure including records relating to particular transaction sessions in progress.

20. The transaction processor according to Claim 19, wherein the compensation data structure includes:

- 5 an offer ID;
a value of compensation units corresponding to the offer;
a location at which the offer is made;
dependencies upon which the offer is to be made; and
a mode of operation, the mode of operation defining display parameters corresponding to how the offer is made.

21. The transaction processor according to Claim 19, wherein the redemptions data structure includes:

- a redemption ID corresponding to an item offered for sale;

5 a frequency with which the at least one user can redeem compensation units
for the item;

a location at which a redemption offer corresponding to the item is made; and
a mode of operation, the mode of operation defining display parameters
corresponding to how the redemption offer is made.

23. The transaction processor according the Claim 22, wherein each portion includes data identifying:

5 a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;
the compensation unit amount for the portion;

a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;

10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before
or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and
the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;

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29. The transaction processor according to Claim 16, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions; and (2) a defined maximum time between two interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted compensation units.

30. The transaction processor according to Claim 29, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

31. A system employing a communication network to compensate at least one user in exchange for work undertaken by the at least one user, the work being offered by an offering content provider, the system comprising:

at least one user terminal;

5 at least one content provider processor coupled to the at least one user terminal through a communication network;

at least one transaction processor coupled to the at least one user terminal and the at least one content provider processor through the communication network;

the at least one transaction processor:

10 receiving a request from the at least one user terminal to transmit a client to the at least one user terminal;

transmitting the client to the at least one user terminal in accordance with a positive evaluation, the client enabling the at least one user terminal to request compensation for work performed by a user of the at least one user terminal, the work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the content provider;

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storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and the content provider;

processing a request received from the user terminal to credit a user

20 account corresponding to the user of the user terminal with compensation in accordance with work performed by the user; and

transferring the compensation from a content provider account corresponding to the offering content provider to the user account if the defined number of interactions has been reached.

32. The system according to Claim 31, further comprising a selling content provider processor, the selling content provider processor offering items to the at least one user in exchange for the redemption of compensation units.

33. The system according to Claim 31, wherein the work is defined as a trail, the trail including a plurality of portions, compensation units being offered by the content provider for each portion.

34. The system according to Claim 33, wherein the at least one transaction processor creates programmatic code needed by the offering content provider to support a web site on the offering content provider processor.

35. The system according to Claim 33, wherein each portion includes data identifying:

to whom the portion is to be made available;

a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;

5 the compensation unit amount for the portion;

a mode of interaction between the at least one user and the offering content provider processor associated with the offering content provider;

a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;

10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before

or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and
the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

36. The system according to Claim 31, wherein the positive evaluation includes:

verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;

5 determining that an ID corresponding to the at least one user is valid and is not on hold;

determining that the offer location is correct, a correct offer location being a web site URL from which the at least one user accepted the offer which matches a predetermined URL; and

10 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user.

37. The system according to Claim 31, wherein a cookie is checked to ensure that the at least one user entered a web site associated with the offering content provider and within a predetermined period of time of accepting the offer prior to transmitting the client.

38. The system according to Claim 31, wherein the interactions comprise any of:

visits to the content provider's website;

actions taken by the user at the content provider's website; and

a predefined number of time period increments spent at the content provider's website.

39. The systems according to Claim 31, further comprising recording each

interaction in a storage medium as the interaction takes place and transferring the accepted compensation units after the defined number of interactions have occurred.

40. The system according to Claim 39, further comprising assigning a code to each web page of the content provider's web site and recording the code in the storage medium when an interaction occurs.

41. The system according to Claim 31, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions; and (2) a defined maximum time between two interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted compensation units.

42. The system according to Claim 41, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

43. A method for using a communication network to facilitate transactions in which compensation units are earned and spent by at least one user, the method comprising the steps of:

5 using the communication network to perform work, the work being defined by a content provider in a manner which does not target specific user profiles, the work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the content provider;

10 making an offer of compensation units to the at least one user in exchange for the performed work whereby the compensation is to be provided after a defined number of the interactions;

accepting the offered compensation units;

storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and the content provider;

transferring the accepted compensation units from a content provider account
15 to a user account if the defined number of interactions has been reached, the content
provider account corresponding to the content provider offering the compensation
units and the user account corresponding to the user who completed the work; and
transferring compensation units from the user account to a spending content
20 provider account in an amount corresponding to a cost of a purchase made by the
user.

44. The method according to Claim 43, wherein the work is defined as a
trail, the trail including a plurality of portions, compensation units being offered by
the content provider for each portion.

45. The method according to Claim 44, wherein the compensation unit
amounts offered by the content provider are not the same for each portion.

46. The method according to Claim 44, further comprising the step of
publishing a trail, the publishing step including the steps of:

creating programmatic code needed by the content provider to support a web
site on a content provider processor associated with the content provider; and
5 displaying the created programmatic code.

47. The method according the Claim 44, wherein each portion is created by
the steps of specifying:

to whom the portion is to be made available;
a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;
5 the compensation unit amount for the portion;
a mode of interaction between the at least one user and the content provider
processor associated with the content provider;

a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;

10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and
the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

48. The method according to Claim 43, wherein the transferring step is completed upon a successful evaluation of the accepted offer.

49. The method according to Claim 48, wherein the successful evaluation includes at least one of:

5 verifying that the at least one user's session is valid;
recognizing the at least one user as a valid user;
determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user; and
verifying that the at least one user is approved to accept the offer.

50. The method according to Claim 43, further comprising the step of transmitting a client to a user terminal corresponding to the at least one user, the client being used to accept the offer.

51. The method according to Claim 50, wherein the step of transmitting the client is executed upon at least one of:

5 verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;
determining that an ID corresponding to the at least one user is valid and is not on hold;
determining that the offer location is correct, a correct offer location being a

web site URL from which the at least one user accepted the offer which matches a predetermined URL; and

10 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user.

52. The method according to Claim 50, wherein a cookie is checked to ensure that the user entered a web site associated with the offering content provider and within a predetermined period of time of accepting the offer prior to transmitting the client.

53. The method according to Claim 43, wherein the interactions comprise any of:
visits to the content provider's website;
actions taken by the user at the content provider's website; and
a predefined number of time period increments spent at the content provider's website.

54. The method according to Claim 53, further comprising recording each interaction in a storage medium as the interaction takes place and transferring the accepted compensation units after the defined number of interactions have occurred.

55. The method according to Claim 54, further comprising assigning a code to each web page of the content provider's web site and recording the code in the storage medium when an interaction occurs.

56. The method according to Claim 43, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions; and (2) a defined maximum time between interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted

compensation units.

57. The method according to Claim 56, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

58. A transaction processor coupled to a communication network, the transaction processor facilitating transactions in which compensation units are earned and spent by at least one user, the transaction processor comprising:

a database, the database comprising:

5 an account holder data structure having at least one account holder record; and

a content provider data structure having at least one content provider record; and

10 a central processing unit, the central processing being coupled to the database and executing the functions of:

evaluating a request from a user terminal to transmit a client to the user terminal;

15 transmitting the client to the user terminal in accordance with a positive evaluation, the client enabling the user terminal to request compensation in the form of compensation units for work performed by a user of the user terminal, the work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the content provider;

storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and the content provider;

20 processing a request received from the user terminal to credit an account holder record corresponding to the user of the user terminal with compensation units in accordance with work performed by the user;

executing a first transaction process which accesses the database and

25 transfers the compensation units from a content provider record corresponding to the
offering content provider to the account holder record corresponding to the user if the
defined number of interactions has been reached; and

30 executing a second transaction process which accesses the database
and transfers compensation units in an amount of a purchase made by the user from
the corresponding user account holder record to a content provider record
corresponding to the content provider from whom the purchase was made.

59. The transaction processor according to Claim 58, wherein the at least one
account holder record includes fields comprising:

5 an account holder ID;
demographic information;
an account holder country;
an account holder language;
personal information corresponding the account holder; and
a compensation unit balance.

60. The transaction processor according to Claim 58, wherein the database
further comprises at least one of:

5 a compensation data structure, the compensation data structure defining ways
in which the at least one user may earn compensation units;
a redemptions data structure, the redemptions data structure defining the ways
in which earned compensation units may be spent;
a transactions data structure, the transactions data structure including records
relating to accepted offers and redemption of compensation units; and
10 a sessions data structure, the sessions data structure including records relating
to particular transaction sessions in progress.

61. The transaction processor according to Claim 60, wherein the compensation data structure includes:

- an offer ID;
- a value of compensation units corresponding to the offer;
- 5 a location at which the offer is made;
- dependencies upon which the offer is to be made; and
- a mode of operation, the mode of operation defining display parameters corresponding to how the offer is made.

62. The transaction processor according to Claim 60, wherein the redemptions data structure includes:

- a redemption ID corresponding to an item offered for sale;
- a compensation unit price corresponding to the item;
- 5 a frequency with which the at least one user can redeem compensation units for the item;
- a location at which a redemption offer corresponding to the item is made; and
- a mode of operation, the mode of operation defining display parameters corresponding to how the redemption offer is made.

63. The transaction processor according to Claim 58, wherein the work is defined as a trail, the trail including a plurality of portions, compensation units being offered by the content provider for each portion.

64. The transaction processor according to Claim 63, wherein each a portion includes data identifying:

- to whom the portion is to be made available;
- a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;
- 5 the compensation unit amount for the portion;

a mode of interaction between the at least one user and the content provider processor associated with the content provider;

a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;

10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and
the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

65. The transaction processor according to Claim 58, wherein the positive evaluation includes at least one of:

verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;

5 determining that an ID corresponding to the at least one user is valid and is not on hold;

determining that the offer location is correct, a correct offer location being a web site URL from which the at least one user accepted the offer which matches a predetermined URL; and

10 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user.

66. The transaction processor according to Claim 58, wherein a cookie is checked to ensure that the at least one user entered a web site associated with an offering content provider and within a predetermined period of time of accepting the offer prior to transmitting the client.

67. The transaction process according to Claim 58, wherein the interactions comprising any of:

visits to the content provider's website;

actions taken by the user at the content provider's website; and
a predefined number of time period increments spent at the content provider's website.

68. The transaction process according to Claim 67, further comprising recording each interaction in a storage medium as the interaction takes place and transferring the accepted compensation units after the defined number of interactions have occurred.

69. The transaction process according to Claim 68, further comprising assigning a code to each web page of the content provider's web site and recording the code in the storage medium when an interaction occurs.

70. The transaction process according to Claim 58, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions; and (2) a defined maximum time between two interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted compensation units.

71. The transaction process according to Claim 70, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

72. A system for facilitating transactions in which compensation units are earned and spent by at least one user, the system comprising:

at least one user terminal;

at least one content provider processor coupled to the at least one user

5 terminal through a communication network;

at least one transaction processor coupled to the at least one user terminal and

the at least one content provider processor through the communication network;

the at least one transaction processor:

receiving a request from the at least one user terminal to transmit a client to

10 the at least one user terminal;

transmitting the client to the at least one user terminal in accordance
with a positive evaluation, the client enabling the at least one user terminal to request
compensation for work performed by a user of the at least one user terminal, the
work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the
15 content provider;

storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and
the content provider;

processing a request received from the user terminal to credit a user
account corresponding to the user of the user terminal with compensation units in
20 accordance with work performed by the user;

transferring the compensation units from a content provider account
corresponding to the offering content provider to the user account if the defined
number of interactions has been reached; and

transferring compensation units in an amount of a purchase made by
25 the user from the corresponding user account to a content provider account from
whom the purchase was made.

73. The system according to Claim 72, wherein the work is defined as a trail,
the trail including a plurality of portions, compensation units being offered by the
content provider for each portion.

74. The system according to Claim 73, wherein the at least one content
provider processor is an offering content provider processor and the at least one
transaction processor creates programmatic code needed to support a web site on the

offering content provider processor.

75. The system according the Claim 73, wherein each portion includes data identifying:

to whom the portion is to be made available;

a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;

5 the compensation unit amount for the portion;

a mode of interaction between the at least one user and the content provider processor associated with the content provider;

a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;

10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and

the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

76. The system according to Claim 72, wherein the positive evaluation includes:

verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;

5 determining that an ID corresponding to the at least one user is valid and is not on hold;

determining that the offer location is correct, a correct offer location being a web site URL from which the at least one user accepted the offer which matches a predetermined URL; and

10 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user.

77. The system according to Claim 72, wherein a cookie is checked to ensure

that the at least one user entered a web site associated with the offering content provider and within a predetermined period of time of accepting the offer prior to transmitting the client.

78. The system according to Claim 72, wherein the interactions comprising any of:

visits to the content provider's website;

actions taken by the user at the content provider's website; and

a predefined number of time period increments spent at the content provider's website..

79. The system according to Claim 78, further comprising recording each interaction in a storage medium as the interaction takes place and transferring the accepted compensation units after the defined number of interactions have occurred.

80. The system according to Claim 79, further comprising assigning a code to each web page of the content provider's web site and recording the code in the storage medium when an interaction occurs.

81. The system according to Claim 72, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions; and (2) a defined maximum time between two interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted compensation units.

82. The system according to Claim 81, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

83. A computer readable storage medium storing computer executable

program code, which when run, executes a method for compensating at least one user in exchange for work undertaken by the at least one user, the method comprising the steps of:

- 5 receiving a request from the at least one user terminal to transmit a client to the at least one user terminal;
- transmitting the client to the at least one user terminal in accordance with a positive evaluation, the client enabling the at least one user terminal to request compensation for work performed by a user of the at least one user terminal, the
- 10 work further being defined by a plurality of interactions between the user and the content provider;
- storing data related to the number of interactions between the user and the content provider;
- processing a request received from the user terminal to credit a user
- 15 account corresponding to the user of the user terminal with compensation units in accordance with work performed by the user; and
- transferring the compensation units from a content provider account corresponding to the offering content provider to the user account if the defined number of interactions has been reached.

84. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 83, wherein the work is defined as a trail, the trail including a plurality of portions, compensation units being offered by the content provider for each portion.

85. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 84, wherein the method further comprises the step of publishing a trail, the publishing step including the steps of:

- 5 creating programmatic code needed by the content provider to support a web site on a content provider processor associated with the content provider; and

displaying the created programmatic code.

86. The computer readable storage medium according the Claim 84, wherein a portion is created by the steps of specifying:

to whom the portion is to be made available;

a URL for the portion or domain in which the portion will be made available;

5 the compensation unit amount for the portion;

a mode of interaction between the at least one user and the content provider processor associated with the content provider;

a period establishing the frequency with which the at least one user can receive compensation units for the portion;

10 textual messages to be presented to the at least one unit at least one of before or after the compensation units are transferred to the user account; and

the inclusion of a silent check-in option for the portion.

87. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 83, wherein the positive evaluation includes at least one of:

verifying that an offer ID associated with the offered compensation units is valid;

5 determining that an ID corresponding to the at least one user is valid and is not on hold;

determining that the offer location is correct, a correct offer location being a web site URL from which the at least one user accepted the offer which matches a predetermined URL; and

10 determining that the content provider has sufficient credit to compensate the accepting user.

88. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 83, wherein a

cookie is checked to ensure that the user entered a web site associated with the offering content provider and within a predetermined period of time of accepting the offer prior to transmitting the client.

89. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 83, wherein the method further includes the step of transferring an amount of compensation units from the user account to a content provider account corresponding to a selling content provider account in accordance with a purchase made by the at least one user.

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90. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 83, wherein the interactions comprising any of:
visits to the content provider's website;
actions taken by the user at the content provider's website; and
a predefined number of time period increments spent at the content provider's website.

91. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 90, further comprising recording each interaction in a storage medium as the interaction takes place and transferring the accepted compensation units after the defined number of interactions have occurred.

92. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 91, further comprising assigning a code to each web page of the content provider's web site and recording the code in the storage medium when an interaction occurs.

93. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 83, wherein at least one of (1) a defined minimum elapsed time must exist between interactions;

and (2) a defined maximum time between two interactions must not occur in order to transfer the accepted compensation units.

94. The computer readable storage medium according to Claim 93, wherein the two interactions against which the defined maximum time is measured need not be consecutive interactions.

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